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1. Betty American

72M

+

# NEEDLES OF PINE

LINES WITHOUT RHYME

BY

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1886

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ROY WEBB  
JAMES  
WEBB

*I dedicate affectionately my little book to my aunt*

*MARY WELLINGTON BATCHELDER.*

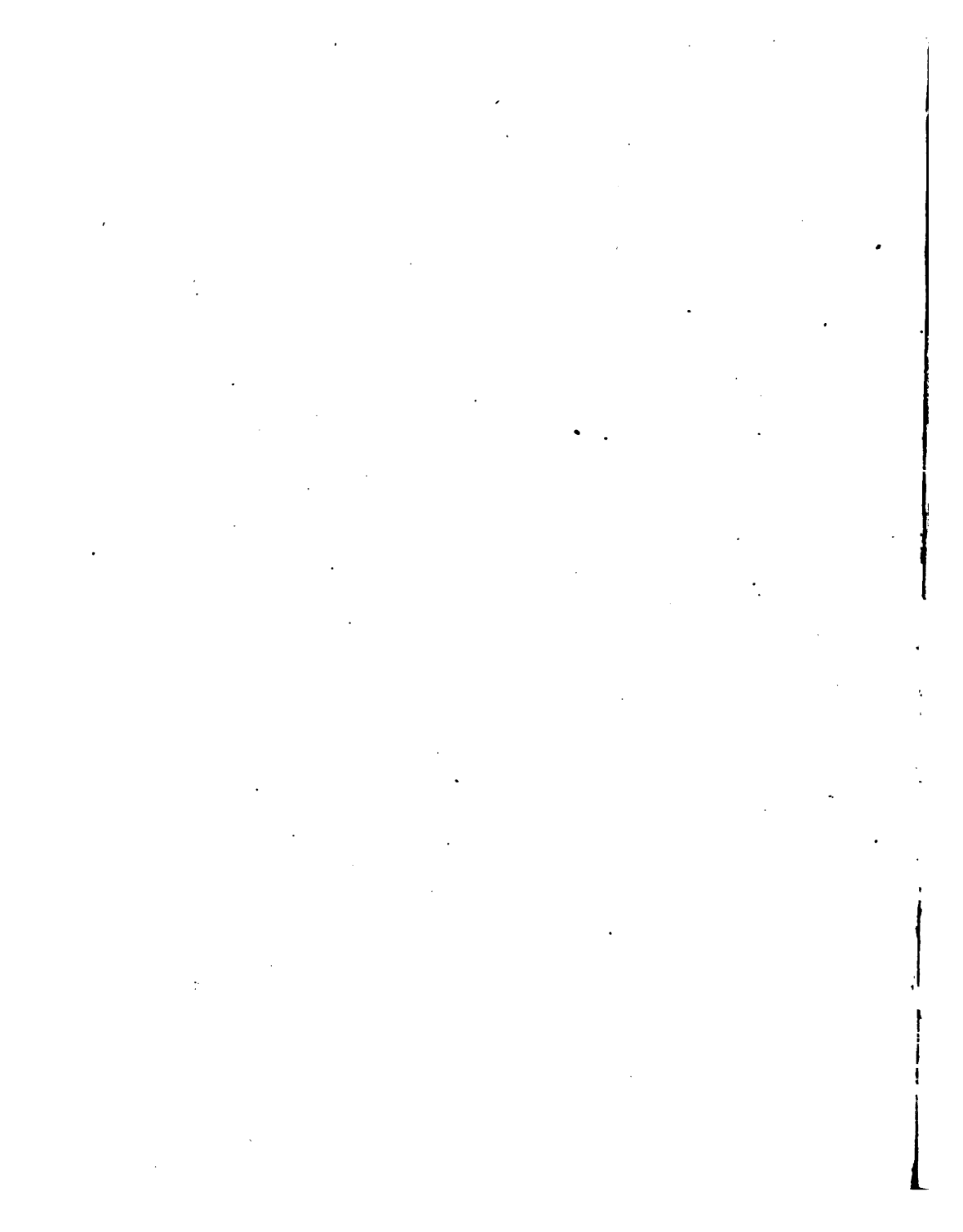
WOR 20 JUN 34





*As for rhyming, very likely I could not if  
I would; very surely I would not if I could.*

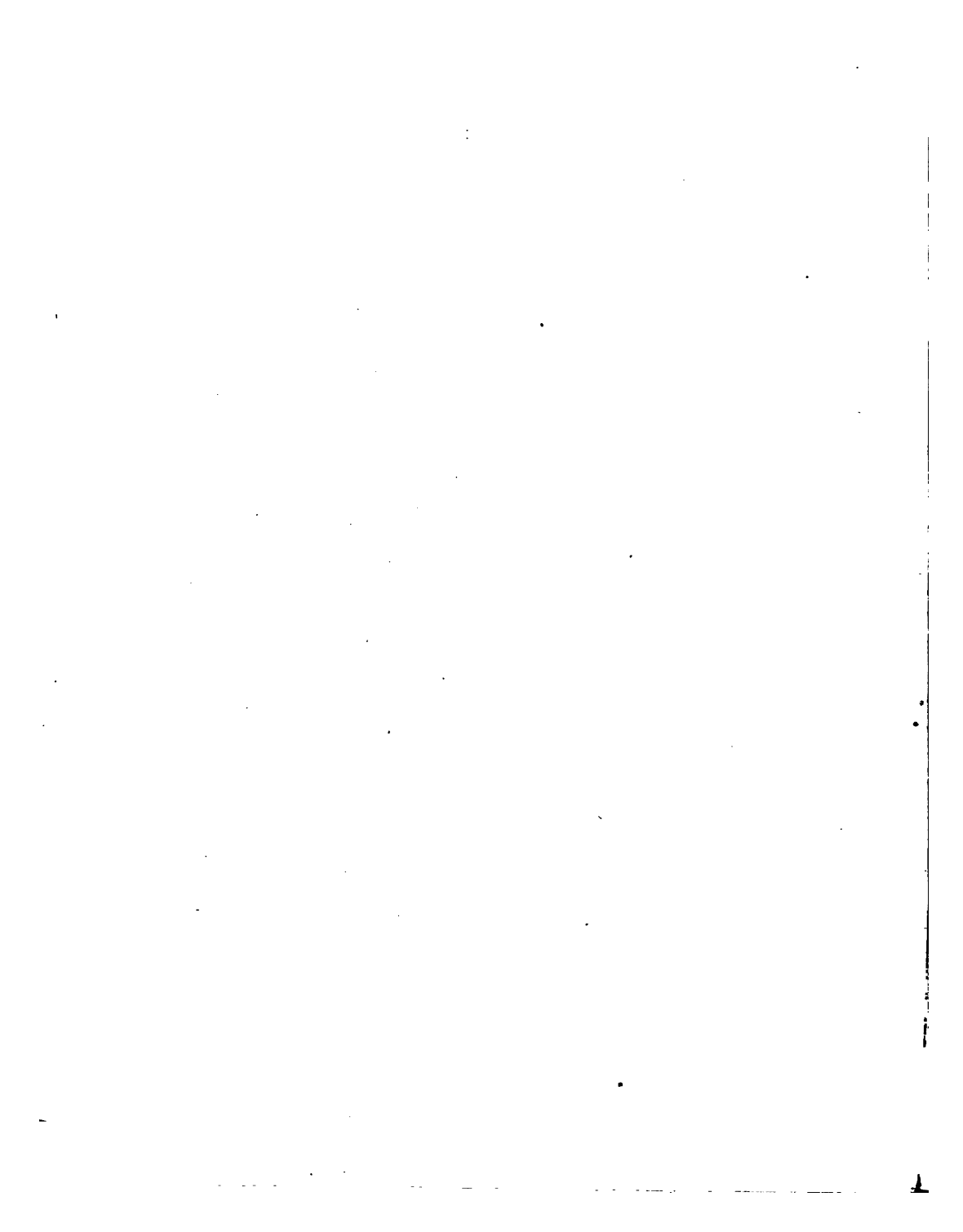
*C. W. S.*



NEEDLES

OF

PINE



I

*Ye Pines that loved my childhood,  
I crave thy sight again ;  
So Gothic in the wild-wood,  
So Saxon in the plain.*

## II

### THE PINE'S WELCOME

WHEN to the rock bound coast the Pilgrims  
    had come for a refuge,  
Here was the Land of Pines; one green and  
    unbroken Cohasset.  
Warm in the slanting rays, they shrouded the  
    desolate headland.  
Under their friendly arms Samoset said *English-*  
    *men, Welcome.*  
Sweeter than voice of man, did the Englishman  
    hear from the pine top  
Tokens in mystic song that here was the heri-  
    tage waiting.

1884

### III

#### THE PINE'S LAMENT

My children, when your fathers came,  
They knew who made the home.  
My fostering strength they loved: so said  
Their shilling, flag, and shield.

My token ye have cast away:  
Ye love me now no more?  
I mourn my valley, plain, and hill.  
Oh children: ah beware.

1884

781882A

## IV

### THE FROZEN BEECH

THE woodland walks are stark and still;  
Long past the summer's kindly glow.  
The trees in patient beauty rise,  
    Wrapped in the gray of peace.

One lonely beech tree sorrows yet:  
Her sheaves of autumn rustle shrill.  
Her heart-strings are twining the poor dead Past,  
    And shiver the winter long.



V

THE WINTER PINE

Dost think the heart of winter hard?  
Her soul without its love?  
Attune thine ear to yonder pine,  
Musing the summer song.

New England's heart is wintery cold?  
Her soul without a love?  
Unstop thy stranger ear; and hear  
Her summer song of pines.

## VI

### THE BABY PINE

SWEET little tree, whence comest thou?  
The mother pines went long ago,  
Torn from the land with ruthless hand:  
Yet here thou greetest me.

Old faithful Earth, with instinct true,  
Restores thee to our sight again;  
Turns from our civilized abuse;  
Turns to her wonted tree.

Grow on: thy babyhood be spared:  
Speed to thy gentle murmuring youth,  
Balmy and sweet to sons of men:  
Then cometh majesty.

Our tree: our steadfast friend of old:  
The Northern heart is warm for thee.  
Dear tree, I knew thy fathers well;  
And they in turn knew mine.

## VII

### THE MASSACHUSETTS RIVER

LONG walls in modern Athens, baked of clay,  
Are baking over in the August sun.  
Ancestral stream, that lapped our olden farm,  
Mine eyes the civic desolation flee,  
To seek thy blue: all nature else is gone.  
Well have they spurned thine ancient wood  
    born name  
Who on thyself have wrought the last despite.  
To call the Massachusetts River Charles!  
For Stuarts did thy western ripples splash?  
Such folk can put the wood thrush in a cage,  
And Saxon freemen tog in livery.

## VIII

### OLD TEMPLETON

MIGHTILY heave thy hills; the breasts of the  
sacred Earth mother:

Silent and dark thy vales; where the thrush  
will resound in the twilight.

Dear are the upland farms; the hallowed abodes  
of the fathers:

Homely the pasture brown, with only the hard-  
hack for heather.

Sweet was that woodland tarn; fair crown of  
thy daughter departed:

Merry thy sparkling brooks; and placid the  
course of the trout stream.

Peerless were erst thy pines; but now they  
are sailing the ocean:

Swiftly their sisters rise; for the pine on her  
hills is eternal.

Wild is the western light that streams from  
the crest of the church hill:

Weird is the waning moon, as she sleeps on  
the mist of the valley:

Dark and defiant the storms that sweep from  
Vermont o'er the midland.

Noble and strong on thee looks Monadnock,  
the prince of the mountains:

Many thy suitors bold, from him to the shapely  
Watatic.

Lovely and grand art thou, fair Templeton,  
queen of the highland.

## IX

### THE OLD GRAVEYARD

THE ancient graveyard slopes adown the west :  
The faithful pines are keeping watch and ward,  
Singing for aye their gentle requiem.

The summer sun goes down behind the hills :  
Its rays come streaming over through the pines  
With light that seems to soften to the sound.

The timid white-top veils the ground below ;  
Such as the gray that silvers o'er the brow  
Of some belovèd mother, young with age.

There lie the hearts that gave us life and name ;  
Each with his own ; but all each other's own :  
God's acre makes the town the family.

Why have they made them all their beds alike?  
Feet to the East, that stoutly trod the West?  
Turn they with longing towards the olden home?

The pine alone, the loving nurse that crooned  
Above the early cradle of our race,  
Can tell that immemorial instinct now.

In Christian days the folks forgot the pine;  
And said they laid their loved ones thus to meet  
The rising sun on Resurrection Morn.

X

THE OLD-TIME DAMASK ROSE

OVER the ridge, along the Western Precinct,  
Runs the old road that takes you up Crow Hill;  
Long overgrown with brush and bastard birches:  
No wheel tracks now; scant passage for a man.

Folding the road there lies the lonely farmstead,  
Growing so small it hardly seems a glade;  
Greeted with silence broken by the blue-jay;  
Wrapped once again in primal solitude.

Back from the road the cellar with a door-stone;  
Filled with the bricks and pinning fallen in;  
All overrun with raspberries and white-top:  
Nature apace can heal the wounds of man.

Where is Clark West? And where the men before  
him?

Gone to their rest; and here their homestead sleeps.  
Where the memorials left to tell the story?  
Where all the works the stalwart Saxon wrought?



Sprung by the frost, his walls have toppled over :  
Pine chasing pine his mowing covers o'er :  
Even the well of never failing water  
Shows not a drop with no one asking more.

All then shall go ? Look yet beyond the bushes :  
There as of old, set out by woman's hand,  
Holding their own against encroaching brambles,  
Winning by beauty space from all around,

Bloom, ever bloom, the sweet old-fashioned roses,  
True to the spot their early days had known ;  
Meekly refusing all the younger gardens  
Perfume and hue their namesakes never learn.

One gleam of romance in the barren life-work,  
One tender thought that speaks the heart  
behind,  
Lives ; while the struggle fails to leave a token.  
Strength fades away : love bloometh evermore.

## XI

### IN THE BAGGAGE CAR

THE rushing train is speeding for the East,  
With many people hurrying to spend  
Thanksgiving in the old New England homes.

The chill November night has settled down;  
Enwrapping in its ever darkening folds  
The silent farms that late were whizzing by.

The father puts his little ones to sleep;  
All but the baby: baby will not go:  
She screams and cries; will not be pacified.

The tired folks in vain lie down to rest;  
They give it o'er, and try to be resigned.  
At last one man breaks out, his patience gone:

"We can't stand this all night; what ails the  
thing?"

For goodness' sake, where is its mother gone?"  
The father, calm and hopeless, sadly said,  
*"She's in her coffin, in the baggage car."*

## XII

### TELLING THE PINES

CONCORD, APRIL 27, 1882

SING low, sweet pines: sing now your song of woe:  
The eye is closed that on you looked in love:  
The ear that heard hears not your wonted sound:  
The heart that loved you beats with life no more:  
The soul that knew you from the earth has fled:  
The voice through which ye spake is hushed and mute.

'Tis ye they choose to strew around the bier:  
'Tis one of you shall ever watch the grave:  
With you alone the gentle grief we share:  
Come with us now: come we and ye alone.

He looked on you as others never look:  
He heard alone the messages ye bring:  
He loved you as none other ever loved:  
He sang you as none other ever sang.

And is the voice we heard a voice no more?  
Sing on, sweet pines; he taught us how to hear:  
Sing on, sweet pines; ye have no song of woe.

## XIII

### THE WINE OF LIFE

SEPT. 28, 1884

THE years of youth are flitting past:  
Their sweet the aged know:  
Then haste to drink the wine of life;  
That cup is ne'er refilled.

Thy fathers sought the chosen shore  
To plant the years for thee:  
In rosy light, on western hill,  
Their tree its fulness yields.

Such years the ages never knew:  
Their joy was forward bound:  
All theirs is ours but the dregs behind:  
Drink deep: thou passest on.

For lips like thine the cup shall fill:  
Thine own shall cheer them on:  
So drink, oh drink thy wine of life,  
And plant the years again.

1884

## XIV

### HOLMES

THE great of eld do vanish fast,  
That make our heritage:  
Their mantles fall; but not on men:  
They leave us not their kind.

New England's voice shall soon be mute,  
Her glories half untold:  
Our fathers showed what we should sing:  
Our little lips are dumb.

One harp Æolian still resounds;  
Now sweetest; for alone:  
Give ear, ye children, while ye may:  
God spare us *Holmes, sweet Holmes.*

## XV

### THE OVER-CLIMBERS

(ON READING COL. HIGGINSON'S MARGARET FULLER)

THOSE Transcendentalists *were* funny folk :  
Just think of them : let's have our little laugh.  
Laugh on ; for is there aught so passing strange  
As hands that smite the rock in desert land ?

1884

## XVI

### THE STEPPED-ON ASTER

" A POETASTER, quite too fresh ;"  
The very words he used.  
I must be brighter than I felt,  
If aster is a star.

1884

## XVII

### WACHUSET

My pudgy friend, you have inspired  
Full many a rhapsody;  
For eastward folk, when up they come,  
Light first of all on you.

Of Worcester County's thousand hills  
A hundred are your peers:  
My Dolbear's just as good as you,  
Except she's not so fat.

It all depends on whence you look:  
Of course you can't but seem  
To one who dwells on Concord flats  
A great and queenly dame.

## XVIII

### THE RIDE OF REMORSE

GALLOP on, gallop on, gallop on, gallop on,  
Thy Past is behind: gallop on, on, on:  
Thy Sins are a mustering: blackly they swarm:  
Thy last fills the quota: their rush is begun:  
'T was thou that begot them: they swoop for their sire:  
Lost man, 't is thy doom night; but on, gallop on.

Over sod which thy childhood in innocence trod;  
Foul spurning the hard-hack that sought for thy hand;  
Over walls and the pasture that owns thee by name;  
Through the brush and the brook with its sinister gleam:  
Thy horse cannot hold; but yet on, on, on.  
And the woods tower over in horrible gloom.



I feel the breath from off the sacred pine:  
I hear her hallowed sound within mine ear,  
Forever murmuring messages of balm.  
"Thou child of man, cast off thy bitter dream:  
With me the forms of dark remorse shall fade.  
Wilt thou not trust the word I ever bring?  
*The love thy soul hath wrought thou canst not lose;  
The ill it wrought shall blow like chaff away."*

## XIX

### THE SPHINX OF TIME

My sable clock in deep cathedral chime  
Sounds an adagio to each vanished hour;  
Voicing the message that in days of old  
Sun-dials gave from faces dumb and grave.

*Thy days are like a shadow that declineth;  
And years are as a fable that is told.*

FUGIO: FUGE

*Haste! With me!*

FUGIT HORA SINE MORA

*So speeds thy day: it may not stay.*

MOX NOX

*The night shall come, wherein no man can work.*

*Haste, Traveller: the Sun is sinking low:  
He shall return again, but never thou.*

Above the clock my sphinx with eye serene  
Looks out the message that she fain would bring.

*I am the Sphinx of Time; thine olden friend.  
Deep in my bosom lies the Mystery;  
The lovely problem that thy soul shall crave  
Till Time shall fade and yet thyself shall be.  
When'er the chime doth speed the parting hour,  
I welcome as a guest the hour that comes.  
The minutes passing are my honey cells:  
Oh that they leave thee laden of thy heart.  
They and their fill shall once be thine again.*

XX

THE PARTING YEARS

BELLS are striking: there it goes:

SÆCVLA PRÆTERITA.

Bells are striking: here it comes:

SÆCVLA VENTVRA.

Bells have stricken: take repose:

ANNVS NVNC FORMONSVS.

JANUARY 1, 1886



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

BILLETS

OF

PINE





I

MY CHIMNEY CORNER

THE South wind shrieks and the rain is hail:  
Then ho for my pine wood fire:  
With my kitty-cat gray and my own true chair;  
And Calumet puffing the peace.  
Come, paper, and taste of my stylo pen.  
I can hear of my slates coming tumbling down;  
But the bill wont come in till to-morrow.

## II

### TURNING TO SNOW

DECEMBER rain is beating down:  
Denuded branches wave and wail:  
The drops against the window pane  
Come splashing fast and big and round.

The blue eyed girl at play within  
Anon has watched the driving storm.  
Now blinks the air with whirling snow.  
*See, mama: God has popped the rain.*

### III

#### THE FIVE GRAINS OF CORN

HARK, Alice: Grandma was a Plymouth girl.  
Her wedding day was forty years ago;  
December twenty-two; Forefathers' day;  
The day the Pilgrims landed on the rock.

When they had worked along for just a year,  
And their first anniversary had come,  
All they had left to eat they passed around;  
For every one five grains of Indian corn.  
They eat it up, and prayed, and trusted God.

And every time the blessed day comes round  
All Plymouth children eat the grains of corn.  
That's why you found them by your plate to-night.  
Now, deary, show me how to put the grains.

\*

\* \* \*

\*

## IV

### THE INCREASE AND HER SKIFF

SEPT. 26, 1883

IN sixteen hundred thirty-five  
The Increase lay in Boston Bay,  
With goodly freight for Watertown;  
For Gregory and Simon Stone  
Had brought the children o'er the sea;  
Trusting the ship with all their home.

Anigh two hundred fifty years  
In blessed increase have floated by;  
And now in glad September breeze,  
Though autumn waves be running high,  
Gregory's daughter, Simon's son,  
Shall take the little skiff to-day.

AS TO THE FATHERS, GOD BE OURS.

1884

## V

### THE ALTERED HOMESTEAD

THE little boy lay stretched upon the mat,  
A gazing in the blazing maple fire  
On sacred hearth coeval with the farm:  
Five generations had been gathered there.

He little knew it was the last sad day.  
E'en as he lay, there came detested men;  
Steel in their hands and murder in their hearts:  
*The alteration shall begin to-day.*

They passed him by and started at the stairs;  
Dear stairs worn deep with touch of wonted feet:  
There Bemis Wheeler struck the first foul blow:  
Rent is the pine, and rent the childish heart.

The thronging years heal not the early pang.  
That old New England life is dead and gone.  
The tears of childhood wept the outward form:  
The sighs of manhood mourn the spirit fled.

## VI

### THE CUTTING HOUSE

TELL me, Prescott and Maria,  
Why your homestead seems to smile  
More than all the other houses  
O'er the hills of Templeton?

Other homes are just as olden;  
Built ere George the Third was King;  
Built by townsmen and by brothers;  
From the same ancestral pine.

Others keep the hallowed chimney;  
Keep the same old window panes;  
Keep the knocker; keep the well-sweep;  
But they have not kept the smile.

There must be some blessed reason:  
Something lingers o'er the farm.  
Yes: it's all you need to tell me:  
*No one ever moved from here.*

## VII

### OLIVER BROWN

IN Templeton poorhouse, down over the hill,  
There died an old veteran, Oliver Brown.  
He died full of years; and the last of the men  
Who had fought at the bridge in his Concord  
town.

That morning he spent stowing cannon away  
Down deep in the hay mow in somebody's barn.  
Then he loaded his gun; with his powder and  
slugs:

The older men's bullets were bigger, and round.  
They fought for the bridge; and he fought like  
the rest;

And the Reds ran away; all but two who were  
still.

And young Oliver heard when a minute-man said,  
*There is one of these men with a slug in his head.*

"So you think, Mr. Brown, you killed one of  
the twain?"

"As to that, Sir, I really can't say; but I know  
Where they were I meant for my bullets to go."

## VIII

### JOSIAH THOMAS THE BLACK MAN

(The Tract now Ashburnham was anciently known as Dorchester Canada.)

IN Ashburnham fair Upper Naukeag lies  
Embosomed in her great protecting hills;  
A little corner of a giant land  
O'er Massachusetts' outmost border thrust,  
To give her hint of majesty beyond.

The hills are spread with thin and sterile soil:  
The north wind sweeps with bleak and bitter  
breath:

But there a sturdy folk have planted home;  
Brave Saxon hearts from out the ancient mould.

There came one day when years dragged dark  
and drear —

But let the farmer give the very words:  
They're worth as much again as all of mine.



“Well, it’s true we have got the said nigger up here:

He stopped on his journey to Canady;  
But we callate he run it as far as he need  
When he got to old Dorchester Canady.  
So we planted him up by the Babes in the Wood,  
In the first of those old vacant housen;  
And gave him some clothes, and some work he  
could do;

And when he had done it, we paid him.  
We’ve made him a townsman of Ashburnham  
naow:

That’s a fact; and you needn’t forget it:  
And if any damn slave-hunters hanker to come,  
Jest send em along for to fetch him.”

## IX

### THE POLLOCKSVILLE RAID

ONCE on a time the Second Maryland  
Went dashing on a raid to Pollocksville.  
Their fellow troops turned back and left them  
there

The wrong side of a river hard to pass.  
Between the camp and them the Rebels lay;  
Too many far for them to fight alone.  
The dreary barren yielded naught to eat:  
Starvation or surrender was the doom.  
An aide-de-camp rode round for fifty miles  
And struck the Massachusetts Twenty-First.  
Three in the morning: quick they started off  
To work the rescue of the famished band;  
Bread, beef, and coffee, bringing up the rear.  
Though faint for breakfast, on the column  
rushed;

Spurning a halt, until the head ones heard  
Far to the front a weak but gallant cheer.

Months go: the Twenty-First are ordered West;  
And on the way are held in Baltimore.  
They seek the haunts where mankind can be fed,  
The hungry fellows eat and drink their fill.  
Now for to pay the scot: "What will it be?"  
Old fat mine host, for all his tribe, replies,  
"The Second Maryland regiment hails from here:  
They've kicked the bushel basket off your light.  
We've heard about your stomach for a charge;  
And when your regiment comes by this way,  
You'll find for members of the Twenty-First  
Saloons in Baltimore hang out *No charge*."

X

ANDERSONVILLE

I

WHAT'S that drove by in a great big sleigh?

And Sunday afternoon?

I never saw that team before.

They glided strangely by.

James Miller: Andersonville: home.

That was the load they bore.

Children, cut off the roses there:

Take the poor fellow some.

And is it mankind in the bed,

That meets our little eyes?

It is alive; for see it cry.

Look down, O God, look down.

II

I see a pale sad woman's face  
Against the window pane.

I see the other soldiers come :  
Is He alive or dead?

I see the *Journal* day by day  
Repeat a piteous plea :

*Will any man who was confined  
In the north of the stockade  
Of Andersonville prison, write  
To Box 10, Templeton?*

## XI

### THE WELL-SPRING OF ANDERSONVILLE

AUGUST 28, 1864

THAT Southern Sun that rose from Hell  
With gleam terrific beats adown  
On scenes of horror never told;  
And in our own America.

The weary months have crawled away,  
But leaving all their trailing woe.  
The stoutest heart is fainting now:  
Death's palling stillness covers all.

A dark comes spreading from the North;  
That blessèd North of which they dream;  
God's country hight; far, far away;  
Naught but a dim sweet memory.

A memory of the shaded stream;  
Of woodland spring and homestead well.  
They dream and wake again to find  
The Georgian sand, an August sky.

The darkness thickens: thunder rolls:  
One blinding bolt comes splintering down:  
The glowing sand-bank rends in twain:  
A well-spring gushes cool and free.

Over the fever palsied host  
There runs a low and thrilling cry:  
Our Fathers' God hath smote the rock:  
The Lord's deliverance is nigh.

The blue eyed German raving sings  
*Ein feste Burg ist Unser Gott;*  
While groups of Worcester County men  
Give back a weak and wild refrain.

*From all that dwell below the skies  
Let our Avenger's praise arise:  
The traitors' God is overthrown:  
Our Fathers' God is God alone.*

*Eternal are thy mercies, Lord:  
Eternal truth attends thy word.  
Let our Redeemer's name be sung,  
O'er all the land, by every tongue.*

## XII

### MEMORIES OF THE WAR

1884

My old friend wrote to me this fall,  
*The only excuse I can give for you is that  
you are too young to remember the War.*

The cruel stigma rankles in my heart.  
My verse may halt; but prose shall never do.  
Read these my memory's lowly lines; and then  
Tell me, old man, have I forgot the War?



COMPANY A

*Aoi! Aoi! Aoi!*

The ancient cry rings o'er our quiet town:  
The struggle, ages long, has burst afresh:  
Rush now afield: will ne'er that work be done?

Company A, Twenty-First Regiment,  
Massachusetts Volunteers.  
And we went to the camp of the Twenty-First  
To see the Templeton boys.

We saw them march away a hundred strong:  
Their lips were stern, but not their longing  
eyes.

I could not go, a puny seven year child;  
But men were in the ranks who bore my name.

Can I and my weak pen that story tell?  
Ah no! I only need to call the roll:  
Each Southern name, when heard in Northern  
homes,  
Tells of itself a tragedy sublime.

Roanoke, Newbern, Camden; glories all,  
That taught the land the thrill of victory.

Manassas number two: on Henry hill  
In one thin line who saved the Union host?  
Chantilly: still we shudder at the sound;  
No other name so wrathful in its gloom,  
Except the cursèd spot on Georgia sod.  
The remnant closed the shattered ranks and  
rushed  
To force at last that fell Antietam bridge.

Then came the charge up Marye's bloody height:  
The livelong day they held that hopeless hill;  
How? With a rampart of their well loved dead.

In Knoxville town they held the dreary fort;  
Starving and fighting; saving Tennessee.

Their years are up : they now may choose to go :  
To Templeton? To Richmond ! back they turn  
To meet the dread beginning of the end.  
The Wilderness was a drawn battle : why?  
Because the Twenty-First sprang in alone  
And turned aside that horrid wedge of steel.  
And now that summer sun looks down aghast  
On such a strife as warfare never knew.  
Talk not ; but only read the lurid roll :

SPOTTSYLVANIA  
NORTH ANNA  
SHADY GROVE  
BETHESDA CHURCH  
COLD HARBOR

And now for Petersburg. For three long years  
Above our men their fate had brooded black:  
As from each blood soaked field they moved away,  
Again, again, again, again, again,  
One man in three rose not at Forward March.  
And now 'tis *three* stand forth to front the foe;  
Wallace and Dunn and Blackmer there alone.  
One whizzing bolt; the gallant three are gone:  
Not one man left to keep the company.

Company A, Twenty-First Regiment,  
Massachusetts Volunteers?  
With record writ, their souls are marching on:  
*Aoi! Aoi! Aoi!*

THE RECORD

Children of our well loved town,  
Grave the tablet on your hearts;  
Heritage from sire to son,  
Whilesoe'er the town shall be.

TO THE MEN  
OF TEMPLETON  
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES  
IN WAR  
TO UPHOLD THE HONOR OF THE NORTH  
TO KEEP THE UNION WHOLE  
TO DESTROY HUMAN SLAVERY  
AND TO MAKE OF AMERICA  
A NATION UPON EARTH

Again, old man, have I forgot the War?





